

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ATHENS 02527 171711Z

43

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3195

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2527

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR

SUBJECT: LOCKHEED: MEETING WITH AVEROFF

REF: (A) ATHENS 2249 (B) STATE 054431

1. I SAW DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF EARLY THIS AFTERNOON AND DISCUSSED WITH HIM HIS RECENT PUBLIC COMMENTS ON LOCKHEED (REF A). I GAVE AVEROFF A COPY OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S PROPOSAL ON CORRUPT PRACTICES (REF. B) AND WENT OVER ITS CONTENTS WITH HIM. I TOLD AVEROFF THAT WE HAD ALSO GIVEN COPIES OF THIS STATEMENT TO FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS AND THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC COORDINATION IN THE EARLY EVENING OF FRIDAY, MARCH 5 (ATHENS TIME), BEFORE AVEROFF HAD MADE HIS OWN PUBLIC COMMENTS THE NEXT DAY AND THAT WE WERE QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT SOME OF THE THINGS HE HAD SAID AND PERHAPS OTHER CONSIDERATIONS THAT MAY HAVE PROMPTED HIM TO SAY THEM.

2. AVEROFF SAID THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF THE USG PROPOSAL ON SATURDAY MORNING, MARCH 6, WHEN HE MADE HIS COMMENTS TO THE CBS INTERVIEWER. HE SAID HE REALIZED THAT HIS COMMENTS HAD BEEN PERHAPS "TOO STRONG," BUT HE INDICATED THAT THEY WERE SPUR OF THE MOMENT, OFF-THE-CUFF REMARKS AND THAT HE FELT HE HAD TO RALLY TO THE SUPPORT OF THE GREEK AIR FORCE. I ASKED HIM TO EXPLAIN THIS, AND HE SAID THAT THE MORALE IN THE GREEK AIR FORCE HAD PLUMMETED FOLLOWING THE

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PAGE 02 ATHENS 02527 171711Z

UNSUBSTANTIATED AND IMPRECISE REFERENCE

APPARENTLY MADE IN A U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE DOCUMENT TO POSSIBLE COMPLICITY BY A GREEK OFFICER IN ILLEGAL OR UNETHICAL LOCKHEED BUSINESS DEALINGS WITH THE GREEK AIR FORCE. AVEROFF SAID SEVERAL OF HIS FINEST AIR FORCE OFFICERS CAME TO HIM, OUTRAGED AND INDIGNANT BY THE SLURS AND INNUENDOS IN THE GREEK PRESS BASED UPON THE REPORT FROM WASHINGTON. HE SAID THAT MANY OF THE TOP GREEK AIR FORCE OFFICERS HAD STRONGLY SUPPORTED AND ADVOCATED AIRCRAFT PURCHASES FROM LOCKHEED AND NOW FELT THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF SPECIFIC NAMES AND CHARGES, THEY WERE ALL UNDER SUSPICION AND THAT ALL OF THEIR REPUTATIONS WERE BEING DAMAGED. THEREFORE, AVEROFF SAID, HE FELT THAT AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE HE HAD A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE A PUBLIC CALL FOR DETAILS AND EVIDENCE CONCERNING ANY SUCH CHARGES AGAINST GREEK OFFICERS AND TO CONDEMN THE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE AMERICAN SIDE THAT ALLOWED SUCH UNWARRANTED SUSPICION AND DAMAGE TO AFFECT THE GREEK AIR FORCE.

2. AVEROFF AND I DISCUSSED THE MATTER FURTHER AND IN SOME DETAIL, WITH ME EXPLAINING AS BEST I COULD HOW, UNDER OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, THIS PROBLEM HAD ARISEN IN WASHINGTON AND HE TRYING TO CONVINCE ME THAT WHAT HE HAD SAID SERVED TO CLEAR THE AIR IN GREECE AND TO MAKE IT CLEAR IN THIS COUNTRY THAT HE WAS NOT AUTOMATICALLY AND IN EVERY CASE THE MOST PRO-AMERICAN OFFICIAL IN THE GREEK GOVERNMENT--THUS SERVING PRESENT AND POTENTIALLY HIGHER LEVELS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN US. HE HAD LITTLE TO SAY ON THE SUBSTANTIVE VALUE OF OUR PROPOSAL ON CORRUPT PRACTICES OTHER THAN TO SAY HE WOULD STUDY IT CAREFULLY AND FOLLOW ITS PROGRESS WITH INTEREST. HE SAID HE WAS "VIRTUALLY CERTAIN" THAT NO ACTIVE DUTY GREEK AIR FORCE OFFICER WAS INVOLVED IN IMPROPER BEHAVIOR IN CONNECTION WITH LOCKHEED AIRCRAFT PURCHASES BUT HE REPEATED HIS DESIRE THAT WE MAKE AVAILABLE TO HIM AND THE GOG AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ANY INFORMATION OR EVIDENCE THAT WE HAD THAT MIGHT SUGGEST SUCH INVOLVEMENT.

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